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PP RUEHQU
DE RUEHPU #0411/01 1071818
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 171818Z APR 09
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9855
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 2292
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 0364
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 2030
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 000411

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SUBJECT: HAITI: CAMPAIGNING CONCLUDES FOR FIRST ROUND OF
SENATE ELECTIONS

REF: A. PORT AU PRINCE 312

[1](#)B. PORT AU PRINCE 378

Classified By: Amb. Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Field observations and a local poll suggest that the April 19 elections for 12 vacant Senate seats (reftels) will likely send only a modest number of Lespwa candidates to the second round of voting. This result comes despite the fact that candidates representing Lespwa, the coalition of centrist parties that brought President Rene Preval to power in 2006, generally led the most vigorous campaigns, leading to accusations that state resources or undeclared private funds were behind the coalition's vigorous publicity efforts. The Haitian government has still not established a system to finance political parties, although the Electoral Law requires Haitian authorities to do so. A few isolated altercations marked an otherwise calm five weeks of campaigning. There have been a few instances of campaign violence, but nothing yet threatening the overall election. The Haitian National Police announced measures designed to minimize the prospects of election-day violence or disorder. End summary.

LOCAL POLL SUGGESTS MODEST LESPWA SHOWING

[1](#)2. (SBU) Campaigning for the April 19 partial Senate elections concludes at midnight from April 17 to 18. It is not ideology or party programs but regional personalities who are dominating this election. While there is much evidence that the Presidency is favoring and probably financing candidates of his coalition Lespwa, there are many departments where opposing candidates are making a strong showing. A local poll conducted March 28-31 predicted that the Lespwa coalition would be represented in the second round in only half of the twelve contested races. According to the poll, which surveyed 3,300 eligible voters on behalf of a local non-governmental organization, six candidates representing the Lespwa coalition were expected to enter the second round in the balloting. The Fusion of Social Democrats (Fusion) and Youri Latortue's Haiti in Action (HAA) also fared well, as both parties looked set to send around four candidates each into the second round. The Struggling People's Organization (OPL) (three likely second-round candidates) and the Union party of Chavannes Jeune (two) had more modest results. The new, pro-Preval UCADDE party looked set to make the second round in two of the three races it is contesting. (Note: We do not have enough information to

assess the reliability of the poll, although the nearly 70 percent voter turnout it predicts is well above most informed estimates. In some cases, knowledgeable local observers found the poll results to differ significantly from their own projections. End note.)

13. (SBU) Lespwa's projected performance, if confirmed by the April 19 elections, would deny the coalition the commanding majority its leaders were hoping to establish in the Haitian Senate. Although Lespwa had developed some distance from Rene Preval since he was elected president in 2006 at the coalition's head, Preval had a considerable role in the selection of the party's candidates, according to two Lespwa officials, and probably hoped a Lespwa majority in the Senate would help project his influence in the legislature. Lespwa officials, however, have expressed frustration that Preval is also backing the new UCADDE party, whose candidates include the former National Palace press attache (Assad Volcy) and a Member of Parliament who was elected in 2006 after campaigning while imprisoned for vehicle theft (Willot Joseph). Although Fusion's candidates are polling well - especially in the West, where Marie Denise Claude is apparently leading a number of well-financed candidates - some leaders of the party's local branches have privately complained that Fusion leadership imposed its choice of candidates, brushing aside prospective candidates selected at the local level.

CAMPAIGN FINANCING: ACCUSATIONS OF MISUSE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

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14. (C) Opposition parties roundly criticized Lespwa for the apparently well-financed campaigns run by its candidates, and rumors are swirling that government slush funds are secretly financing Lespwa candidates. Senate Justice and Public Security Committee Chairman Youri Latortue (Haiti in Action, Artibonite) accused Minister of Interior Paul Antoine Bien Aime of channeling government resources to Lespwa campaigns, and promised an investigation into the matter. However, Lespwa Senator Cemephise Gilles (North) defended her party against the charge of being the government favorite by declaring the week of April 6 that her party got the bulk of its funds from the private sector. NDI agrees that the private sector is financing candidates, principally Lespwa but others as well. But NDI field staff have observed vehicles and other equipment belonging to the government procurement agency (CNE) being used by candidates in at least two departments, the Center and Southeast. Virtually all Lespwa candidates have cars, and all appear to have more money for their campaigns than their opponents. In his press conference with the U.S. Secretary of State April 16, President Preval promised that charges of illegal financing would be investigated.

15. (SBU) Despite provisions in the Elections Law for the funding of registered political parties fielding candidates, the Ministry of Finance has still not announced how or whether such subsidies would indeed be calculated and distributed. Fusion and OPL have applied for government financing, but neither the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) nor the Ministry of Economy and Finance has responded. Political parties are also miffed that the CEP rejected a considerable number of election observer applications submitted by a wide range of parties for reasons that are not yet clear.

MORE ISOLATED CLASHES IN PROVINCES

16. (U) There have been incidents of campaign violence and intimidation, but not at the level that would threaten the overall election. In the Center Department, reliable reports from NDI representatives say that supporters of the pro-Preval UCADDE party candidate Willot Joseph attacked

supporters of Fusion Candidate Chevry Emmanuel. There have been clashes in Grand-Anse between Fusion and Konba supporters. In addition, there have been altercations between supporters of Haiti in Action and Fusion candidates in the Northeast, and Nippes has also seen isolated election-related incidents. NDI reports there have been negotiations between drug trafficker and would-be candidate Guy Philippe and Fusion, which could lead to Philippe supporters backing the Fusion candidate there, Marie Autotelaine Belle Fleur.

HAITIAN POLICE GEAR UP FOR ELECTIONS

17. (U) The Haitian National Police (HNP) and MINUSTAH have stepped up security preparations for election day April 19. The HNP ordered the border with the Dominican Republic closed on election weekend, banned all public gathering and suspended all concealed weapons permits for that period, banned private vehicle traffic and ordered all stores closed on election day, and has ordered all evening entertainment venues closed on the April 18 eve of the election. Schools are closed Friday April 17 and Monday April 20 for use as polling places. HNP spokesman Gary Desrosier told the press April 16 that all HNP units were deployed and warned that anyone who tried to disrupt the voting would be arrested and turned over to prosecutors.

18. (U) Members of the Fanmi Lavalas (FL) party -- all of whose candidates were disqualified by the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) -- continue to call on all voters to stay home on election day. Activists close to FL street organizers Rene Civil the week of April 13 called for election day demonstrations the Bel Air, Martissant, and LaSaline slum areas of Port-au-Prince. Embassy LES staff report seeing leaflets being dropped on streets warning people who went out on election day to place a note with

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their names inside their socks -- implying they risked being killed, and that the notes would help identify their bodies.
SANDERSON